

Program Helps Upstate Workers Kick the Habit and Stay Quit

Issue

Geraldine, a 50 year-old woman from Greenville, started smoking when she was only 8 years old. She recently decided it was time to quit because she was worried about smoking around a good friend who has emphysema and diabetes. However, quitting was not an easy task for Geraldine or the hundreds of South Carolinians like her who try to kick a powerful addiction every year. In 2004, Greenville County had more than 80,000 smokers and totaled more than \$7.9 million dollars in smoking related hospitalizations. Smoking is a contributing factor of cancer, the second leading cause of premature deaths in Greenville County. Research has shown the most effective way to help smokers quit for the long term is to pair medication with behavioral counseling and support.

Intervention

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control partnered with Greenville Family Partnership to develop a program for people just like Geraldine who wanted to quit smoking, but didn't have the time or money to invest in costly and lengthy cessation programs. Dedicate 2 Quit (D2Q) offered at targeted worksites in Greenville County was developed to accommodate Upstate working families and reach those who did not have funds to pay for cessation programs. This program, which includes four, one-hour weekly sessions offered at worksites, would not have been possible without Block Grant funds to support staff and provide key resources. The program provided participants with:

- Basic education on understanding how chemicals in the tobacco affects the body;
- Information about the direct and indirect cost of smoking;
- Challenges faced in quitting smoking and how to overcome those challenges; and
- Tips for quitting and setting achievable goals.

For those unable to participate in D2Q, scholarships for other structured programs were available. After a year of the D2Q series, businesses needed a support system for participants who decided to quit smoking, so D2Q Forever, a monthly support group, was developed. Dedicate to Quit helped convince employers to provide their workforce with important smoking cessation resources such as nicotine gum and patches, counseling and support groups.

Impact

Geraldine quit smoking and has stayed quit for eight months. Without a Quitsmart scholarship and support from her D2Q Forever group, Geraldine admits that she would not have been able to quit. She now sleeps better, has more energy, and her overall health has improved. Geraldine was so inspired by the program that she encouraged two friends to join the D2Q Forever support group. Because of the programs' success, the following additional impacts have occurred throughout the Upstate:

- Forty (40) people received scholarships, 100% of D2Q Forever participants remain quit;
- More than twenty (20) businesses have implemented changes in their smoking policies with ten (10) worksites going completely smoke-free affecting over 1250 employees.

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